

Göteborgsstudier i nordisk språkvetenskap 46

Locating, Constructing, and Disciplining Self and Other

A Discourse Ethnography of Civic Orientation in Sweden

(Svensk sammanfattning)

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SWEDISH TITLE: Att lokalisera, konstruera, och disciplinera Den Samme och Den Andre: En diskursetnografi om samhällsorientering för nyanlända i Sverige

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Abstract

This thesis is a multilevel discourse ethnography concerned with discourses and discursive constructions pertaining to Civic Orientation for Newly Arrived Migrants in Sweden. Civic Orientation is a provision that follows a general trend often referred to as ‘the civic turn’, which describes how states in the Global North have converged in their migration governance by using educational programmes as the primary tool through which they aim to ‘integrate’ migrants. The programme, established in 2010, aims to facilitate entry into the labour market and society. Taught in the participants’ first language, or another language that they have good command of, the programme is a rich site of multilingual interaction and politics. Drawing on a range of theoretical concepts, but anchored in a Foucauldian research tradition, this thesis analyses (1) policy documents regulating the programme; (2) a print media corpus covering publications about civic orientation between 2002 and 2021; (3) individual semi-structured interviews with 14 people charged with interpreting and implementing the policy; and (4) classroom ethnographic fieldnotes from six such courses delivered during the first half of 2020, three each in English and Arabic. The analysis focuses in particular on (1) how values are discursively negotiated and constructed; (2) the construction of Sweden as a nation-state in relation to the migrants’ countries of origin, and (3) how specific ways of being Swedish and non-Swedish manifest throughout the programme. The thesis is based on four articles, and, through a multilevel analysis, the results show how values such as gender equality and democracy are nationalised as specifically Swedish values. Such constructions can be seen from the print media corpus, through the interpretation of policy documents, and in practice in the classrooms. Furthermore, Sweden is presented as the best country in the world in terms of values and how to organise society, in contrast to the Arab World in particular. Through the deployment of common-sense discourses based in Swedish exceptionalism, Sweden is presented as the pinnacle of scientific and human progress. Such a discourse further plays a crucial part in the construction of Swedishness, through which migrants’ knowledge(s) and experience(s) is used to make them realise how and why they are wrong and how they can change into ‘developed Swedes’. Ultimately, the thesis illustrates how state power is exercised discursively and materially through civic orientation.

KEYWORDS: multilingualism, migration, integration, civic integration, discourse ethnography, Foucault, nationalism, the Arab World, Sweden.

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